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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 003918

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SUBJECT: AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE VISIT TO ANKARA, JUNE 6, 2003

Classified by Ambassador W. R. Pearson for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Five members of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) including Harold Tanner, president, Shula Bahat, chief operating officer, Stanley Bergman, board member, Marian Bergman, board member and Barry Jacobs, director of strategic studies visited Ankara on Friday, June 6 to meet with senior GOT officials Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, President Ahmet Necdet Sezer and General Hilmi Ozkok, as well as AK Vice Chairman for Press Murat Mercan.

12. (C) Tanner delivered a message to Turkish interlocutors that the Middle East Peace Road Map may change regional dynamics, just as the fall of Iraq changed many things in the region and suggested that without the fall of Iraq, there might not have been an opportunity to restart the peace process. He cautioned that the new dynamic places a greater burden on Turkey to define its place in the world order.

13. (C) High-level Turkish interlocutors reiterated consistently similar themes to Tanner at each visit. Erdogan noted the importance of the AJC and praised its efforts on behalf of Turkey in Washington. He also stressed that Turkey could play a major role in the Middle East, commenting that Gul was planning to visit Sharon and Abu Mazen and that he himself planned to make a follow on trip to the region. Gul said Turkish-Jewish relations

disappointment in Turkey's level of support for the war in Iraq, but argued that Turkey is able and willing to be a valuable partner for the U.S. on Iraq, as well as Iran and the Middle East Roadmap. In response Tanner advised the damage to the U.S.-Turkey relationship can be repaired, but with actions, not words. Reacting to Gul's comment that Turkey has no objection to a resolution on the Armenian issue as long as the word "genocide" is not used, Jacobs said the AJC will continue to lobby against an Armenian genocide resolution, but it will be more difficult to defeat than in previous years.

14. (C) Tanner thanked Ozkok, his last appointment of the day, for what he described as a summation of Turkey's foreign policy and recommended that Ozkok (i.e., the Turkish government) suggest things they can/are doing. Ozkok described the current rift (with the U.S.) as a "misunderstanding" and insisted Turkey "could and should play an important role in Iraq." Observing that the Armenian genocide issue posed bilateral and multilateral challenges for Turkey, Ozkok asserted that Turkey is very careful in its dealings with Iran and Syria since they are immediate neighbors. Tanner cautioned that members of Congress were surprised, hurt and offended that a strategic partner such as Turkey had not supported the U.S., which would make it much harder to defeat the Armenian genocide resolution this year. Tanner recommended that Turkey help with the humanitarian and infrastructure rebuilding of Iraq. Concluding the meeting with Ozkok, the Ambassador suggested that it would be helpful if Turkey explained what it considered to be legitimate activities, i.e., refueling or training, that could be conducted at Incirlik,
PEARSON